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Reproductive Cloning – Sincerely, The Inevitable

Lee M. Silver, a professor at Princeton University, analyzes the social impact of progressive reproductive technology through the story, “Jennifer and Rachel.” He depicts the use of cloning, as a means of reproduction, as inevitable. Though moral concerns arise, they cannot be considered concrete arguments against reproductive cloning.

In 2049, a prosperous single woman, Jennifer, wants to give birth to her own child without the need to contemplate unknown factors from a sperm donor; therefore, she makes the decision to clone herself. As cloning is illegal in the U.S., Jennifer goes out of the country to be artificially inseminated with her own DNA, thus creating her cloned baby girl, Rachel.

Considering that cloning takes away a person’s unique somatic attributes, some believe Rachel will be severely mentally affected. Silver recognizes that there *will* be those who despair over this understanding, but asks if this thought is so threatening to children like Rachel, that they should not have even been born. He compares this reasoning to impoverished children whose parent(s) lack the funds and resources to raise one, or multiple children, stating that the morality of the question remains the same. This reason alone, Silver retorts, is no better than stating that a child born into poverty shouldn’t be born at all. Cloning should not be the issue – the accountability of the parents, Silver rationalizes, is what should be taken into examination.

Silver recognizes the esteemed views a fellow expert on the subject of bioethics, Dr. Daniel Callahan: Callahan claims that humans have no right to engineer someone’s biotechnical makings, and that the undertaking of such an act would be similar to providing a window into the child’s future, forcing the child to consider their likely future ailments. Silver argues that, though Rachel’s future condition may be predicted by the life of her mother, other characteristics that come with age or time (such as balding or genetic diseases) are observed in normally procreated persons.

Silver contends that though Rachel’s genetic makeup mirrors Jennifer’s, her upbringing will not; therefore they are not the same person. The two will grow up in different times with different technology and opportunities, resulting in different choices and attitudes in each woman’s life.

Silver also addresses the issue of Rachel’s lineage: Technically speaking, though she was born from Jennifer’s body, she is categorically Jennifer’s parents’ biological child. Consequently, reproductive cloning will redefine the meaning of familial relations.

The argument is made that Jennifer will subject Rachel to unrealistic expectations and live vicariously through her life. The same can be said for any “normal” child, Silver claims, with parents who wish only for the best opportunities for said child, therefore, this should not, and cannot prohibit the creation of one’s offspring.

As new technologies develop in the reprogenetic field, they are incorporated into global culture, disregarding the views of the religious. Thus, leaving God out of the process, Silver reasons, cannot be considered a valid argument. The Vatican opposes this reproductive method on the grounds that an embryo should not be touched. Silver, however, reports that the cloning process does not tamper with the fetus – only unfertilized eggs are used in addition to regularly regenerated, adult cells, such as those found on one’s outer layer of skin.

*New York Times* columnist, William Safire, makes the claim that allowing cloning for reproductive purposes would disrupt evolutionary processes. Because said cloning is expensive, it would be restricted to the higher classes of society. The upper classes, Silver maintains, represent only a small fraction of the billions that populate the earth, most of which are reproducing naturally.

In the U.S. and other societies, humans have the right to or to not procreate. Cloning, however, Silver states, postulates the opportunity to steal another person’s genetic material without their consent or knowledge. Needing only one cell to create this reproductive process, the opportunity to steal a person’s DNA and clone them becomes an attainable possibility, opening the floodgates to prospects such as celebrity cloning. Silver ponders the possible market for celebrity DNA, with the incentive of raising a clone child into fame. He shoots this theory down on the notion that it would take entirely too long – decades even – for the costs to outweigh the benefits.

Silver’s held case is as follows: As new technologies and opportunities arise, despite all arguments, will become inevitabilities. Neither the government nor society will be the controllers of cloning – the marketplace will. Because there is money to be made, a supply will be provided to satisfy the demand.

Work Cited

Silver, Lee M. “Jennifer and Rachel.” *Remaking Eden: Cloning and Beyond in a Brave New World* (1988): 117-25. Rpt. in *Writing in the Disciplines: A Reaader and Rhetoric for Academic Writers,* 6th ed. Ed. Mary Lynch Kennedy and William J. Kennedy. Boston: Pearson 2009. 340-46. Print.